Matters of Attention
Draft Syllabus – Bibliography

Note to prospective students: This should give a sense of the terrain we plan to cover in this class; a final trajectory through the material is still in the works, along with a final selection of our core texts… DGB&SR

An IHUM Graduate Seminar
Spring 2013
D. Graham Burnett, History, History of Science
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Mondays, 10-1

Attention, regulating what enters consciousness, lies at the nexus of perception and action, aesthetics and ethics. This course will move from a history of changing ideas about attention, through current research, and on into the implications for seeing and experiencing as modes of being. Since works of art can be understood as reified requests for attention, we will take them as important case studies in the investigation of what attending has meant and can mean. Consideration will be given to the training and altering of attention, to spectacle and the manipulation of attention, and to the shifting economies of attention in the modern period. Some attention will be given to attention’s dialectical antitheses: distraction, secrecy, and invisibility. Ultimately, we will seek to understand (and experience) the role of attention in both the cognitive and the affective domains.

Rudolf Arnheim, Visual Thinking
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible
Jane Bennet, Vibrant Matter
Jacques Ranciere, The Politics of Aesthetics

Week 1 - Introduction & Orientation

No readings.

Week 2 - The Idea of Attention


Examine/ Be Aware of

Walter Pillsbury, Attention (1906), London: Sonnenschein, 1908.

Thodule Ribot, The Psychology of Attention, Chicago: Open Court, 1896


Week 3 - Aesthetic Attention: Looking and Perceiving


Examine/Be Aware of


Week 4 - Instrumental Attentions: Affordances and Observations


Examine/Be Aware of


**Week 5 - Training and Altering Attention**


Examine/ Be Aware of


**Week 6 - Absorption: Effortless Attention, Flow & Play**


Week 7 - The Life of Things: Do Things Attend to Us?


Week 8 - Invisibility and Looking Away


Examine/ Be Aware of


Week 9 - The Internet and the Attention Economy


Week 10 - Spectacle and Entertainment


**Week 11- Agency: Attention in Action**


**Week 12- The Politics of Attention**


Examine/Be aware of: